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**Obey CALLS FOR COMPROMISE
FROM ADMINISTRATION ON BUDGET PRIORITIES**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI), the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, made the following statement on the House Floor today:

"I'm an old-fashioned legislator, and I believe that the way the parties ought to proceed is that we first ought to define our differences and then we ought to resolve them.

"We've already defined our differences with the passage of the 12 (appropriations) bills in the House. I doubt that the Senate bills are going to get any better from our standpoint. And so it seems to me that time's a wasting. It seems to me that we would best serve the needs of the country if the Administration would be willing to sit down with us now and begin discussions about how we might reach compromises on these bills so that we can move forward.

"Now, let me make one additional point. The President is asking us to spend about \$200 billion - every dollar of that borrowed - in order to finance the supplemental for the war in Iraq, and yet he's objecting to the fact that in the House passed bills we tried to take about one-tenth of that amount and use it for crucial investments in our country's future.

"The job of this Congress, the job certainly of this Committee, is to make investments that will benefit the country over the long haul and make us a stronger country and make us a stronger society over the next ten years.

"We don't believe, on this side of the aisle, and I think, in fact, we had significant bipartisan agreement if you take a look at the votes, we don't believe that you'll accomplish that strengthening of the country by cutting vocational education by 50% as the President does in his budget; by eliminating all student aid programs except for Work Study and Pell Grants as the President does; by gutting education technology grants as the President does in his budget; by actually reducing the number of medical research grants at N.I.H. as the President does in his budget - I've never had anybody come up to me in my life and say, 'Obey, why don't you guys get together and cut cancer research?' and yet that's what the Congress has done in the last two years - we don't think that ought to happen, so that's why we depart from the president on that score.

"We also don't think we strengthen the country when we cut special education by \$300 million, and there are a good many republicans who agree with that. In fact, Mr. Walsh, the ranking Republican on the Labor, Health, Education, and Social Services Committee, Mr. Walsh led the effort to increase the funds that our Committee provided for special education and I commend him for it.

“We also don't think it's good to cut mental health and drug abuse funding by \$160 million. We don't think that we strengthen the society of this country when we cut minority health professions' training by 66%. We don't think that we improve health care for children by cutting the training of medical personnel in children's hospitals by 63%. And we don't think we strengthen rural America by cutting rural health programs by 54%.

“We don't think we help make our communities better and cleaner by cutting the Clean Water Revolving Fund by 37%, as the President does. We don't believe that we meet the needs of our logging industry and the recreational needs of the American people when we cut the Forest Service budget by 15% as the President's budget does. And we don't believe that we ought to cut housing for disabled Americans by 47% or senior housing by 20%.

“In an age of high gas prices and high energy prices, we don't believe that we ought to cut the Low-Income Heating Assistance Program by 18%.

“And let me say, that Democrats are not the only ones who believe that. If you take a look and analyze the votes on the various appropriation bills that went through the House you will see that on average we had 65 Republicans who voted with us in support of the appropriation bills that we sent over to the Senate. And, in fact, if you average out each of the roll calls for each of the bills that passed, you will see that exactly two-thirds of this body voted for those bills.

“So I think we have established a bipartisan foundation in the House for moving forward and I hope this Continuing Resolution gives us the necessary time to do that.

“I would hope that the Senate can move forward and complete its work on a bill by bill basis, but, frankly, it is immaterial to me whether the bills are produced one by one or if they are produced in bunches. What counts is not the form. What counts is the substance. What counts is whether we make the right investments to make this country stronger over the long haul. That's our obligation no matter how we package it.

“So I would once again simply urge the Administration to sit down with us and begin to talk about how, as adults, we can reach a compromise on these issues.

“The President would have the country believe that we are blowing the lid outrageously on budgets and pouring money into the domestic budget. I would suggest that restoring \$16 billion in Presidential cuts is mighty small potatoes in comparison to the \$200 billion that he wants us to spend in Iraq and the \$50 billion that he still wants us to provide for tax cuts for people who make a million bucks a year.

“Let me remind the House, Mr. Speaker, that in 1980, the appropriations for domestic budgets equaled 4.8% of our total national income. Today they have been reduced to 2.9% of our total national income. And the President's budget would take us, by the year 2012, down to 2.4% of the nation's income. That means that we would have cut in half our investments relative to our national health. We would have cut in half those domestic investments since 1980.

“I don't believe, and I think there are many in both parties who don't believe, that that is the way that we build a stronger future for this country.

“So I would simply point out that what we have here is an effort on our part to add about 2% to what the President is doing in the area of education, health care, science, law enforcement, and all of that. And I'd simply suggest that instead of continuing to talk about it, we sit down and have some more productive actions. We sit down and try to work out these differences between us so that we can leave town at a reasonable time having completed action on these bills and having met our responsibilities to make the investments that will, over the long haul, make this a stronger country.”

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* * [See Video of Obey Delivering This Statement](#) * *

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